

► **PACKING DAY ARRIVES:** Soldiers from CTF Chamberlain were very glad for this day to arrive. Foot lockers and duffle bags were inspected by Customs and loaded in a con-
nex.....2

► **NEW DAD CLUB:** Babies born during this deployment are highlighted in this section. There are several fathers anxious to get back and spend time with their new children.4

► **JAG SECTION:** SSG Waite introduces the team he has worked with. He also includes a poem, and several haiku's about the deployment7

Bayonet *forward*

Flag Raising Ceremony at FOB Sharana

On March 6, 2007, soldiers of Combined Task Force Chamberlain stood at attention as the flags of the United States of America, Afghanistan, South Korea, Poland, and Australia were brought to full staff. This ceremony marked the first time that all the flags of Combined Task Force Chamberlain were flown at Forward Operating Base Sharana.

The picture below shows the soldiers of HHC 240th Engineer Group, the Polish soldiers who recently arrived in Sharana and Momen our interpreter who is shown traditional Afghan dress.

The building, movement and standing up of a brigade element in a combat zone is a tremen-

dous feat. Under the leadership of COL Swartz, CTF Chamberlain met the requirements of division, and has now enabled CTF Rugged to begin their rotation with a brand new brigade headquarters built by a coalition of engineer forces.



Greeting from COL Swartz

To the Families of the 240th Engineer Group – Greetings from Afghanistan. Spring is slowly returning to Afghanistan – in the lower elevations green grass is sprouting and soon the goat herds of the Kuchi nomads will once again be seen grazing the countryside. With this “teaser” of spring comes the realization that we have now completed our eleventh month in Afghanistan, our thirteenth month of active duty. There is much to be done between now and when we end our mission here, but enough has been done already for me to make some judgments about the 240th Engineer Group. We have come through much together, and your Soldiers have risen to the challenge every day, week after week, month after month. They have accomplished great feats, and I am so extremely proud of them and of what we will leave behind here. There have been many



Soldiers happy that packing day has finally arrived for CTF Chamberlain.

long days, and we will face more before we return home. But return we shall, and we will hear your cheers and see your smiles, and the tears on the faces of both you and us will be tears of joy at being reunited. Hold fast, hang in there, mark the days off the calendar



One soldier tries to stuff his pillow in an already full duffle bag

- God willing soon we will see you face to face at last.

*COL Les Swartz
240th Engineer Group
CTF Chamberlain
Commanding*



Soldiers from Combined Task Force Chamberlain gather on the cold morning of March 3rd, 2007 to pack their footlockers and duffel bags on Air Force pallets in preparation for going back to the U.S.

Greeting from the ALOC at Bagram

"As we wind down..." What a great thought to have floating around in your head. We have certainly come a long way from last March when the Advance Party arrived here in Bagram, Afghanistan. We were all looking around wondering what we had gotten ourselves into, and amazed at the beautiful mountains and the heat. The mountains are still here and covered with snow again, but we're still waiting for the heat to arrive this year.

I have had the pleasure over the last couple of months here of working with the ALOC staff. You can see the majority of them pictured here, taking advantage of having Brigadier General Boyles and Command Sergeant Major Small available for a scenic picture on our observation deck. The ALOC folks are a great "team" and a hard working crew. We were able to pull together, adapt to all the changes and still have fun in the meantime, acting like a Detachment of the Headquarters as they moved to Sharona to complete our mission there. We all provided some parting thoughts about what this deployment has meant to us as we prepare for the long journey home. Here are some of them.

"This deployment opened my eyes to how much I had previously taken for granted and has given me a better perspective on what is truly important in life. It has also given me a sense of purpose, of having done something truly meaningful that, in some small way, has made a difference." SFC Matt Walker

"I have learned more than ever the importance of a strong family relationship with the loved ones we leave behind. We make new friends, new acquaintances, but none that could ever replace what we miss the most, our family. This has been an amazing year of ups and downs, and it helps always knowing the Soldiers who came here with me are the ones I could count on most when I need a helping hand. I appreciate more each day being a member of the National Guard, especially the Maine Army National Guard." SGM Terry Harris

"This deployment has broadened my experience: serving at the brigade level for the first time, developing and writing plans and orders, and working with a division staff. It has provided me the opportunity to reconnect with the Maine National Guard." MAJ Chris Tatian

"The time I've spent here in Afghanistan has brought me on a totally unanticipated and yet quite interesting journey. I've worked along side soldiers from other countries as well as different active duty soldiers from across the U.S. I've learned more about the military and



Soldiers from the 240th Engineer Group ALOC (Administrative / Logistics Operations Center) at Bagram Air Field are joined by BG Boyles, CSM Small, CSM Luce, and COL Swartz.

what's actually going on with the war out here then I'd ever imagined. Traveling the countryside and working to help build this country back up through various engineering projects, providing humanitarian aid items to remote villages as well as employing & teaching the local nationals. Overall I've really enjoyed my deployment here in Afghanistan and as much as I've really missed my family/friends at times, I wouldn't be opposed to going on another deployment." SPC Jennifer Paradis

"This deployment has afforded me the chance to re-evaluate what is important to myself and my family." SSG Trevor Gleason

"This deployment has been quite an eye opener. I am now able to see what I took for granted every day. I realize how much I really do enjoy the simple things in life. I realize how important it is to take things one day at a time, and to treat every day as it is going to be your last, because you never know what life will bring." SGT Jess Larrabee

"I feel over the last year that this deployment has made me realize how good we have it in the United States. We should all be very proud to live in America. Hooah!!!!!!!!!!"

"Senior" SPC Rusty Hopkins

"This deployment has given me a greater appreciation for several things, a few of which

are: 1) Warmth. The warmth of family, friends, and loved ones at home and new friends here. The warmth of having a safe home to go back to; 2) Freedom. The freedom to move about virtually unrestricted. The freedom to express our opinions without fear of retribution. The numerous freedoms that we take for granted and the security to be able to take them for granted; and 3) our political system/form of government. The way it actually does work. And I also appreciate being away from and not having to listen to those involved in it for a year (except for Matt)." SGM Steve Moody

"Coming to Afghanistan made me realize all the luxuries we have in the US; maybe I might not spend as much money when I get home. With the United States coming here, we have done a lot to build up Afghanistan and the local nationals do appreciate it. I am very proud to be part of this deployment to help Afghanistan. This deployment has made me realize how much my family cares about me and what they will do for me. They have also sacrificed a lot for me. It has truly brought me closer to my family and of course my dog." SGT Jodi Pelletier

Article submitted by SGM Harris
ALOC NCOIC



"Proud New Dad" Club

There are many challenges during a deployment, one being is the amount time away from ones family. At the send off in Augusta, now over a year ago, we left our loved ones to do a mission; and yes some of our loved ones were to give birth while we were over 7,000 miles away. Some of us secretly cheered over all the diaper changes, the doctor appointments, and all the late nights we would miss, but we knew our wives would certainly have us make it up to them when we got home.

Each one of us was at a different stage in our relationship with our family when we left. Some had just gotten married weeks before the deployment, and others were working on adding that last member of the hockey team, but we all have something in common that we want to do when we get off that bus: kiss our wife and hold our newest family member and give them a big kiss on the cheek. We are all counting the days.



Bryan Ouellette— Father, Bryan Ouellette/ Mother, Michelle Ouellette

Bryan's arrival was timed perfectly. His father, Bryan, arrived home and was able to spend about a week with the present family, then approximately another week with the new arrival and his family. The actual birth was accomplished in about 26 minutes.

Bryan's parents never even had a chance to check into the hospital before the baby came. He behaves awesomely and is a treat for his mom and siblings. Indeed, he is growing so fast that his father barely recognizes him, but will spend a lot of time together upon his return.



Kaitlyn Elizabeth Shannon — Father, Mathew Shannon/ Mother, Sarah Shannon

Kaitlyn Elizabeth Shannon was born at 4:30pm on July 10th, 2006, at Maine Medical Center in Portland, Maine. She was 6 lbs 8 oz and 19.5 inches long.

While Sarah was giving birth, I was in 140 degree weather in Kuwait trying to get home in time for her birth. The day I left was July 10th and I was due home on the 12th; just in time for her due date. I was greeted at the airport by my mother and father-in-law and my 16-month-old son Isaac. It was very unfortunate that I missed her birth, but the good that came out of it was once I arrived at the hospital, I was able to take my family home only an hour later.

While at home, we took the kids to the Gray Animal Farm and Story Land. Though Kaitlyn wasn't able to enjoy those places, Isaac sure had a good time. As most everyone experienced, leave was a very quick two weeks and before we knew it, it was time to fly back to Bagram to finish out the tour. In the past 7 months, Kaitlyn has learned how to roll over and is attempting to feed herself. It is still messy, but mom is there with a washcloth, a chuckle and occasionally a camera to catch the precious moments that I'm missing. It will be just a matter of time before she will start to crawl. And like her big brother, she loves to gnaw on flat daddy. One saving grace that I have, in the technology driven age that we are in, is a camcorder. Sarah is able to capture the kids on camcorder and send the tapes to my mother who then puts them on a DVD so I can watch them here. Often times it is very difficult to watch, but I am able to enjoy their growth via DVDs.

Once I get home, there will be a lot of making up to do with both Isaac and Kaitlyn and of course Sarah. I have hopes to be home for Easter so I can see Isaac find Easter eggs and

watch Kaitlyn crawl and walk for the first time. Changing diapers... who'd of thought that I missed that? I can't wait to give Sarah a break from the diapers, midnight feedings, baths, and chasing the kids all over the house. I do have to get used to the cartoons that seem to captivate Isaac, and since Kaitlyn adores her older brother, I'm sure that she will be right beside him watching Diego and Dora.



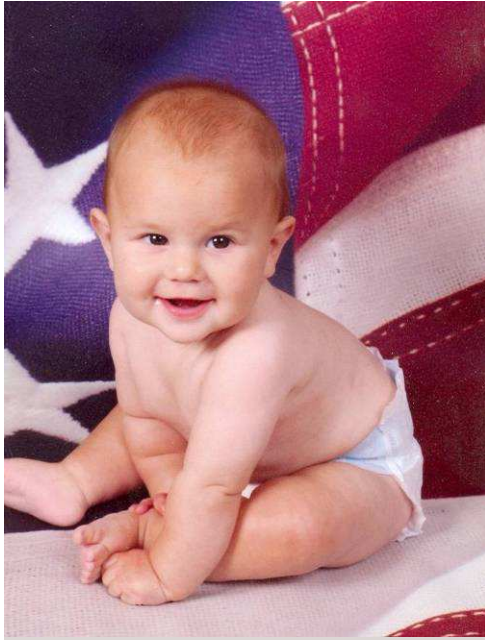
Madison Rae Jones—Father, Roy Jones/ Mother, Kelly Jones

Madison Rae Jones was born on July 15th just a couple days after her father came home for leave. Madison's mother was in labor for 2 days after the doctors decided on a c-section. She was born at 7:47pm. She weighed 6 pounds and 14 ounces and was 19 7/8 inches. Now she scoots backwards and around in a circle and has 2 teeth. She is almost crawling. She says DADA, HI, waves bye-bye and loves her daddy doll.



Continued on page 5

Proud Dad Club (continued)



Alec Smith, Father, Mark Smith/ Mother, Jennifer Smith

Alec Smith was born on March 23, 2006. Throughout this year I have enjoyed the many videos and pictures that my wife Jennifer has sent me of Alec. These helped very much with missing his first year. Alec has an older brother Derek who turned 2 in December and an older sister Baylee who is 9. I was able to see Alec crawl for the first time "forwards that is" while I was home on

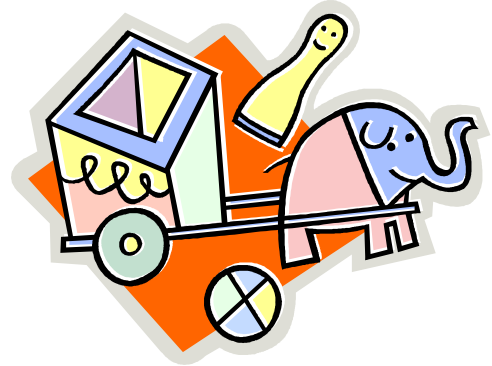
leave. Now that he is mobile his brother's matchbox cars have his interest, which will begin the lesson in sharing toys. My wife says he is a very happy baby and giggles all of the time. The Smith household sure has been busy this year with many diaper changes and I am sure I will get several opportunities when I get home to catch up (LOL). I look forward to going home and getting to know Alec and being his dad.



*Giacomo Donato Winston Churchill Smith
Father, Steve Smith/ Mother, Milva Smith*

On May 5, 2006 Giacomo Donato Winston Churchill Smith was born in Bangor, Maine. Milva, CPT Steve Smith's wife, underwent a scheduled c-section. CPT Smith called in from BAF and a special dispensation was given by the hospital to allow a cell phone in

the surgery. Steve and Milva were able to talk on speaker during the birth while Milva and Dr. Paola Rinaldi chatted in their native Italian. Milva was assisted by her sister Giovanna. CPT Smith saw Giacomo for the first time at the airport at Christmas. As of the end of February he is getting ready to walk.



Pictures and articles gathered by SPC Roy Jones



SGT Beltran & 1LT Campbell with a micro-cache.

When the soldiers from the S2 and S3 are not working hard on gathering intelligence and tracking the battle, they can be seen to traipsing around FOB Sharana "Geocaching." Geocaching, for those that don't know, is a outdoor treasure-hunting game using Global Position Systems to both hide and locate containers, items of interest, and landmarks. There are thousands of caches located in over 200 countries all over the world and there are even some in Afghanistan.

Fun Times at FOB Sharana

While we were still stationed at Bagram Airfield, SSG Mikesell, SGT Beltran, and 1LT Campbell found a few caches on the base. Some were easier to find than others, but the group had great success.



SSG Mikesell holds a Geo-cache that he found.

Upon moving to FOB Sharana, the group was excited to discover that there were three caches located somewhere within the fortified walls. Two of the caches were "micro" and only big enough to hold a small piece of paper as a log book. One cache was larger in size, harder to reach, and a challenge to find. SGT Beltran and 1LT Campbell decided to leave some flavor

packets in that cache as soldiers drink mostly water in theater and sometimes it's nice to have a different taste on your palate. After finding the three caches, you think the "game" would be over, but SSG Mikesell has decided that the FOB needs more caches and would like to emplace some for future seekers. He will use his personal Global Positioning System, a Garmin 60CSx, to emplace the caches at various locations across the FOB. SSG Mikesell knows soldiers from future rotations will enjoy finding his caches and



A close-up of what a Geo-cache looks like.



SFC Grimshaw stands with Momen, the interpreter, after assisting in the flag raising ceremony.

As I sit and start to write the final (S4 Section) of the newsletter from Afghanistan, it seems like so long ago we left Maine. So much has happened since we have been gone. We are all getting excited to return home as we count the days.

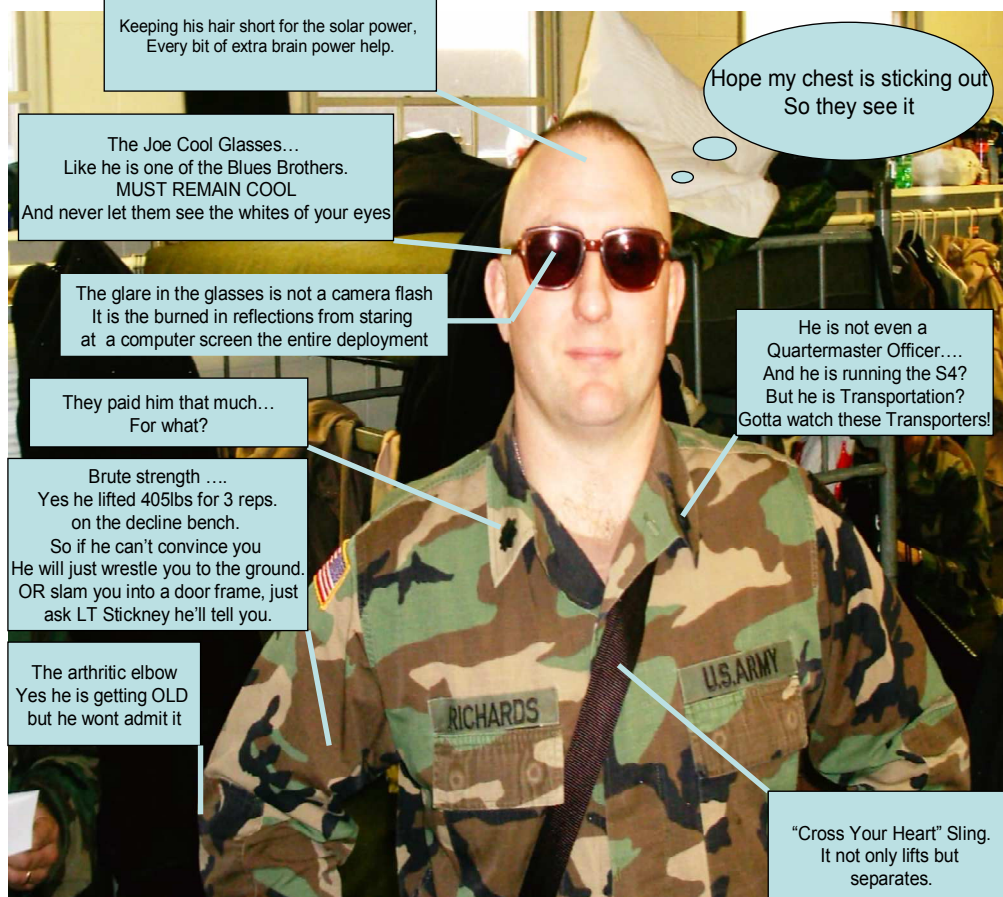
Those of us who moved to Sharana are now are in full swing working at the Forward Operating Base (FOB) and every day is one day closer to being home. I would have to say one of the most challenging and difficult things that have come from this deployment has been being away from loved ones. We are all getting excited to return home after such a long deployment and return our lives to some type of normalcy.

MSG Hanning is now dealing with all the contracts on the Forward Operating Base and keeping the operations running.

We also run the Class 4 yard with all the building materials (not quite like Home Depot) for Sharana. When Chamberlain took control of the Class 4 yard it was a disorganized mess with no accountability until SFC Grimshaw took charge and turned it into a controlled organized operation (as well as got a suntan in January). SFC Grimshaw is also taking on the role of Responsible Officer for all Maine unit equipment as well as the Unit Movement Officer for the movement of Maine equipment home, all which keep him very busy.

Brigade S-4 Section

The building of a Brigade S4 LTC!!!!



LTC Richards once again bearing the brunt of the S-4 Section's jokes. SFC Grimshaw took the opportunity to "roast" his boss one last time.... in living color.

SPC Jones continues to be busy working through the analysis of the budgets on road projects, working closely with LTC Corbett making sure we stay legal on spending millions of dollars on construction operations. In addition, hanging up the phone for LTC Richards when his arthritic ("old")... (YES OLD, I said it) elbow just does not have the strength to do it.

LTC Richards has been working through an investigation and his e-mail (which he will complain that he is flooded with too many... "not to disturb him until he can catch up"). He also provides the leadership (adult supervision) to the S4 section.

Since our move to Sharana, SGT Pelletier is holding the fort down in Bagram. She has doing an excellent job as our S4 representative with Division and the Battalions. She has now been reinforced by SGM Moody (a great addition and asset to the S4 section).

SGM Moody, the newest member to the S4 team, brings not only years of experience in contracting but added NCO leadership (and horsepower) dealing with Division and the Battalions.

CW2 Mathieu is finalizing property book issues with both Maine property and property that will remain in Afghanistan... and PT (when she is not on a food scavenger hunt).

Article Submitted by SFC Sean Grimshaw



JAG Section



Left to right, SSG Edmund Wait, CPT Kim, CPT Smith, and LTC Corbett.

Deployment from a Paralegal's perspective

Hello back there in the real world. This is SSG Waite reporting from the land of the sand. I am the CTF Chamberlain paralegal, and we have a saying around here in the Command Judge Advocate's Office, "The nail that sticks up will be hammered down." You may be asking what the heck does a paralegal do in a combat zone? Well, let me tell you – as little as possible! All kidding aside, as the Chamberlain paralegal it is my duty to track and monitor a myriad of legal issues within this combined task force. The most important function of a paralegal is to assist the judge advocates and unit commanders in matters pertaining to the administration of military justice. As a paralegal of CTF Chamberlain, I am a part of a very import legal team.

The Chamberlain legal team consists of the Command Judge Advocate, Trial Counsel and a Paralegal. Our team deals with legal issues such as fiscal law, rules of engagement, informal investigations and military justice. When it comes to fiscal law issues, I would be remiss not to mention our Fiscal Law Officer and Command Judge Advocate, Lieutenant Colonel Hugh T. Corbett, a major mover and shaker in this task force, and a man that is responsible for the legal review of projects that involve the spending of millions of your tax paying dollars. The other member our

team, Captain Stephen C. Smith, is our Trial Counsel. You could say he is the district attorney of the task force. He would be the hammer referred to above. However, I do want to note that oftentimes we spend just as much effort looking out for the rights of Soldiers as we do in prosecuting them. Finally, we have two other important members of our team and they are Sergeant Onita Brown of the 27th Engineers and Specialist Karen Shevelev of the 37th Engineers.



SGT Onita Brown, paralegal for the 27th Engineers.

These two Soldiers are the battalion paralegals of our task force and I work with them on a daily basis. In fact, I would be proud to say that we have developed into a great team – one of the best in the theater of operations! It has been a great pleasure of mine working with these two fine Soldiers, and I will miss them both. In order to become a good team you have to be able overcome the difficulties of operating in a combat environment.



SPC Shevelev, paralegal for the 37th Engineer Battalion on a humanitarian aid mission.

For example, you have to overcome the difficulty of units in your task force being located in different geographical areas, network problems, servers going down, interrupted phone service, inadequate bandwidth and having to scan just about everything. I believe overcoming these automation difficulties have by far been the most challenging part of my job at times. Now that we are coming close to the end of this journey, I have almost grown immune to the automation problems. I've grown to learn that it comes with the territory. I don't want you to think that I've spent all my time inside the office, because that's just not the case. Besides shuffling paperwork, I have had plenty of opportunities to venture "outside of the wire."

When I say outside of the wire, I don't mean a trip to the local Wal-Mart. The term the U.S. Army currently uses is "Combat Logistic Patrols." These types of missions can be quite difficult and strenuous, particularly when you are my age, but nevertheless they very rewarding. The sights, sounds, smells and visual experiences of traveling in this ancient land will indelibly be etched in my mind forever. From the humanitarian mission of bringing a young boy to a hospital in Kabul to have his club feet evaluated, and the battlefield circulation missions through the hot dusty mountain passes with the "Old Man" leading the way, these missions will always be foremost in my mind when I think of my year in Afghanistan. I can honestly say that not many Army paralegals get the opportunity to do the things I have done since being here, so I guess I fell in with the right crowd. All in all, it has been quite the journey. In parting I would like to say that we love you all, and we look forward with great anticipation to seeing your smiling faces in Augusta!

Continued on page 8

JAG Section (continued)



SSG Edmund Waite manning the 50-cal. machine gun on one of the convoys.

The Stan

Welcome to life in the Stan
Came in with such grandiose plans
With disregard for Taliban
They said the South and East were fine
Somewhat messing with our minds
Perhaps they all were just so blind
To see what they would really find
In such a land that seems sublime
It feels as though were marking time

So there will always be next spring
When sands will blow and birds will sing
And we'll continue with that road ring!
And pray that it makes freedom sing
So we'll move and without fear
To bring about a bit of cheer
To those who are, but have not none
Yet toil away beneath the sun

So there you go my good old friends
I'll say goodbye to this old land
And it will dwell within the sand
Forever more – Afghanistan!



CPT Smith, prepares for a convoy as a Truck Commander.

HAIKUs of a journey to Afghanistan

A WASTE OF TIME

I know of a place
And it was a waste of time
Camp Atterbury

LAND MINES

Watch out where you step
For what might lie beneath you
You could lose your feet

MY B-HUT

It is called a hootch
The wood eaters have their way
It is my B-Hut

THE ENEMY

Hey there Army Man
You have got to make a stand
Killing Taliban

MILITARY JUSTICE

Once there was a nail
It stood high above them all
Hammer had to fall

50 CAL

There is no other
As bad as this big mother
It is oh so sweet

RIDING IN A HUMMER

A GUNNER'S VIEW
Chugging right along
The landscape swallows us all
Inside filled with song

THE VILLAGE FROM NOWHERE

Built into a hill
Where time seemed to stand still
I saw a village

KABUL

Veggies, fruits and carts
They stop to embrace and meet
On the city streets

LOST DONKEYS?

Running down the road
On an early morning jaunt
Foot loose fancy free

BUTCHER SHOP

Dangling from a hook
Was a large red hunk of meat
Hovering with flies



A butcher shop just outside Kabul

PORT-A-POTTY

Writings on the wall
Where a Soldier contemplates
Intimate desires

PACKING

Think that you can pack
Hundred pounds of Army crap
In a ten pound bag?

BOYS OF AFGHANISTAN

Grappling hand to hand
The struggle -- part of a plan
To become a man

COUNTRY GIRLS OF AFGHANISTAN

So young, yet so grown
Wind swept hair and bold
Face etched with despair

CITY SCHOOL GIRLS - KABUL

Walking heads held high
Gliding on the wings of hope
Signs that freedom bring

SHOES

A used pair of shoes
How much joy will it will bring
To a simple man



LTC Corbett drinks a quick cup of coffee before a trip to Molla.

*Article written by SSG Edmund Waite
Paralegal*



“My Deployment” by CMS Staff



SPC Damren manning the M240B as he did for several convoys.

Being deployed to Afghanistan has changed my look on life. I always heard my parents say “there are starving countries out there and you’re throwing food away.” After being over here for a year you get to see all the hardships this country goes through that we take for granted. To see the children running around with no shoes and barely enough clothes to keep them warm throughout the year is enough to make anyone feel for this country. I am glad that I have had the opportunity to come to Afghanistan with the 240th EN GP and make this country a better place for the local Afghans.

Written by SPC Richard (Rounder D) Damren



SPC McGee gets of the CH47 at FOB Ghazni as it refuels.

I have learned a lot about myself during my time here in Afghanistan. It has changed my perspective of life in a lot of ways. The deployment has undoubtedly had a positive effect on my personal development.

By SPC Matthew McGee



SPC Hopkins poses with one of the children from Molla Village.

I would say that my most lasting memory is of the trips that we took to Molla for the drop offs. I was able to make several trips out to this site. Yes the locals would bug us a lot but it just proved to me that we are making a difference over here. I also learned that the people of this country do not have much at all. They loved to get anything from us. They received anything from pens to clothes. They really needed every bit of it. It makes me realize that we have everything we need and then some back home in the states. The kids in the States do not know how much stuff they really have compared to the kids over here.

By SPC Russell Hopkins



SPC Polky (lower left) poses with the convoy members he led to Jalalabad Airfield delivering bridge parts.

This past year with the 240th EN GP has been one of the best experiences of my life. I have built some very strong relationships with my fellow soldiers and friends. I also have strengthened my relationship with much of my family. Thanks to the experiences and opportunities that I have had during this deployment I have grown leaps and bounds as a person. They will be kept in the forefront of my mind with every experience that I find myself in for the future. Thanks to all of you for the support and friendship.

By SFC Patrick Polky



SSG Gleason taking a break after a convoy to Kabul, Afghanistan.

I remember taking a local Afghan boy to a hospital in Kabul to help enable him to walk on his feet. Will always remember this trip and hope that others can help children in this country have a better life.

By SSG Trevor Gleason



SFC Romano headed back to Bagram after a successful mission in Sharana.

My most memorable memories are of working on the new brigade headquarters in Sharana. Facing the challenge of working with a unit that had never built a wooden structure as large as the one we built. Getting away from the desk in Bagram and do what I enjoy most, construction. While working on the project, I got a chance to work more closely with the 1st Korean Construction Company. I found that once they were free from the watchful eye of their command they had a chance to more freely open up with us and show who they were individually. I had a great time and hopefully made as good an impression as they made with myself. It will stand out as my most memorable memory.

By SFC Anthony (Tony) Romano



CMS crew with their coalition partners after the 4th of July BBQ.

My experience in Afghanistan has been challenging and trying, yet rewarding. It has been my privilege to serve with exceptional soldiers, from Maine, who sacrificed so much of themselves for the greater good of our nation.

I also consider myself fortunate to have worked so closely with our Coalition partners—the South Koreans and the Polish. Few people have the privilege to work hand-in-hand with members of Coalition Nations and the opportunity to have a positive impact on our countries' relations. In the process, we learned a lot about each others' countries and cultures and forged strong friendships. It has been an experience I will never forget.

By SFC Matthew Walker



MSG Smith and 1LT Cheever sit in a mortar pit in Forward Operating Base Asadabad waiting for a CH47 helicopter to pick them up and take them back to Bagram.

My 27th birthday was spent in a Humvee trekking the cliffs of the Pech River in the Konar Province of Afghanistan. Along with me was a fellow lieutenant, Darrell Davis; the CMS Section's great Lead NCO, MSG Mark Smith; and finally a well respected mentor... a truly wonderful man... the late CPT Pat Damon. We spent that weekend sucking dust, sleeping in open tents (where a dog licked my foot), mixing with the crazy children of Kandagal Village, inspecting the site of the infamous Bailey Bridge (erected later that summer), and finally waited... waited in the small base called Asadabad as

CMS Section continued

fully loaded helicopters denied our quest for an empty seat home to Bagram. Three days in all... sleeping in the hottest B-Hut ever inhabited, baking in the hot landing zone sun, and drinking near-beer in the evening... all the while, developing relationships to be remembered for a lifetime. Of all the work we've done in this year, the great accomplishments we have been a part of, and the adventures that are etched in our memories, the finest moments can be described as those that bonded us together... Soldiers, Friends, Family.

By 1LT Joe Cheever

Many experiences and memories will stay with me forever from this deployment. The amount of work that the CMS section produced during our tour amazes me to this day. Some examples are the several roads we resourced, to the multiple buildings we planned and designed, to the recons and convoys we supported. I am very proud to have been their NCOIC and serve with the men and one woman of the Construction Management Section, CTF Chamberlain. The one that sticks out the most was the recon I went on with CPT Damon, 1LT Cheever and 1LT Davis to the Korengal Valley to check out the river crossing for the Pech river bridge. The things I saw along the way will be imprinted in my mind forever, such as the children, the mountains and the rushing Pech river in which we followed along. Most of all I will take back a feeling that we made a difference here in the lives of the Afghan people. Lastly I am reminded by serving here in Afghanistan how great our country is and will always be because of the great men and women who serve everyday.

By MSG Mark Smith



MAJ Scott with his fellow engineer partners in Bagram.

Probably the thing that will stay with me from this deployment is the experiences gained from working with other engineer units outside of our own. Over the course of this rotation, I have worked closely with Korean, Polish and

US Air Force engineers in addition to US Army engineers.

By MAJ Roger Scott



LTC Leimbach on the Wazi Kwah road project.

Picking a favorite picture was a difficult choice. There were two others that made the top three. One was SFC Walker's re-enlistment. This was special because of the high regard I have for him as a traditional Guardsman, Soldier and American, and that he selected me for this honor, which I will never forget. The other was Lieutenant Davis' promotion in Salerno. This was done on behalf of the Task Force Commander, and was also a great privilege because of the high regard I have for 1LT Davis and his contribution to our success in a location far removed from the rest of the CMS team.

The photo above is also a favorite because it captures the culmination of what our section provided: staff support for effective designs and sufficient materials to accomplish each of our major construction missions. The unseen Afghan shepherd in the background captures a secondary effect of building roads, which benefits commerce and travel for the Afghan people. Finally, the soldier whose attention is directed away from the camera speaks to the ever-present security and situational awareness that accompanies everything we do, and the teamwork we established with all the units in our Task Force.

I am very proud to have had the opportunity to lead this staff section, and humbled by the greatness exhibited by our soldiers and NCO leaders each and every day. To the families back home: thank you for bearing the pain of separation and loneliness. Know that we have spent this precious time well by adding to the noble tradition of the American Soldier. We advanced the cause of freedom for the oppressed, and brought hope to where there was none. We couldn't have done it without your support, patience and love.

LTC Greg Leimbach



Memorable Story from Salerno



The Longest Day, April 17th, 2006

I had been in Afghanistan for 18 days, we had a long mission ahead. I got up early and saw the sun come up as I walked back from the showers. We were heading out to a remote part of the province to recon the route for the road we were going to build to a small checkpoint controlled by a certain government agency. Since we were going to be crossing into and building a road into their area we left Salerno early to go to another smaller FOB in the area (FOB Chapman) to meet with them so we could do some coordination. That took a few hours. We then headed out on what we thought would be a 54 kilometer ride – we had been most of the way to our objective but knew there were a couple of possible routes, one down in the river bed and one that crossed over the mountains.

We chose to recon the mountain route first, our humvee's took us up to about 8,000 feet in elevation when the road - more like a goat path at this point - became impassable at a small village. We dismounted and spent a few minutes talking to the village elder, he assured us that except for the short section of road right by the village the road was passable as one climbed the mountain. He offered to show us the route so off we went.

Now mind you that we soldiers were wearing helmets, flak vests, carrying weapons and extra ammo. The locals, who live and work in these mountains everyday, laughed at us as we quickly became short of breath. They strolled by us wearing nothing more than what we would call pajamas and flip-flops. They offered us their hands to get up the steeper sections but pride certainly wouldn't allow us to take it. Only about four of us out of the twenty that started finally did make it to the top of the mountain at over 9,000 feet.

After finding that the route mountain was impassable to our humvees (at that time) we still needed to reach the terminus of what would become one of our longest and most arduous road projects. We decided that we could press on, taking the route through the riverbed. Needless to say progress was slow. We finally made it to the border checkpoint and we spent some time with the Afghan commander of the border police – we had chai (tea) and snacks. Finally after an hour or two we headed back towards our home base. We were two-thirds of the way back by dusk.

We had to cross a 300-meter-wide (mostly) dry river bed. The road on the other side was completely blocked by construction equipment that was parked overnight – we headed down stream in the wadi in the general direction of the FOB. The platoon sergeant in the lead vehicle suddenly came over the radio, shouting – “Stop your vics (vehicles) DO NOT FOLLOW.” I was in the second vehicle and in the fading light I was able to see his humvee sink deep in the mud.



The humvee that was stuck in the mud.

The humvees with the armor shielding weigh over 12,000 pounds. We tried to pull the stuck humvee out of the mud with my vehicle. It wouldn't budge – we hooked up first one, then two...then eventually 5 humvees to the pig stuck in the mud. Between the weight, the lack of leverage and the suction of the mud we had no luck, we broke tow straps, ropes, chains and cables. We had no luck.

We called back to the FOB for help in terms of a huge wrecker and settled in for what we thought would be an hour or two as the recovery team got prepared. Night had fallen so we passed out NVG's (night vision goggles) and sent out teams on a defensive perimeter. So there I was, not three weeks in country, freezing, wet, lying in a mud puddle thinking to myself, “man this stinks.”

A call came over the radio that the wrecker had rolled over just outside the gate on the way to get us. That meant now that we had an even longer wait as yet another recovery team had to be established and geared up. Finally, many many hours later the recovery team arrived, they had driven a grader all the way from the FOB, with its powerful engine and 6 tires, it had the strength and the traction to make quick work of pulling the humvee out of the mud.

We finally returned to the FOB – I was wet and covered with mud from head to toe. I, grabbed some sweats and a towel and headed



to the showers. I went in wearing everything; uniform, boots, helmet, flak-jacket. I finally got all my gear and my body clean and I dried off. As I walked back to the hooch, I saw the sun rise in the east.

*Article submitted by 1LT Darrell Davis
A member of the Salerno TAC team.*



Religious Support Team



CH(CPT) Brian Converse , CH(CPT) Dustin Rodriguez, and CH (LTC) Andy Gibson stand together during a recent visit to Forward Operating Base Wazi Khwa.

along with your soldier (no surprises!); adjust slowly and patiently.

At first, you will look weird to your soldier and your soldier will look weird to you; you both will feel weird. In three months, you all will be feeling better, but your soldier will look only a little less weird. In six months, your soldier (and you) will look and feel even better. In one year, this deployment will only be part of your collective memory. Time is so important. Give it time and roll with it. Greet each other with the kiss of love!

God Bless You,

CH Andy Gibson

Anyone desiring to submit information for the newsletter can send it by e-mail to:

Nathaniel.Grace@afghan.swa.army.mil

Further pictures can be found at the 240th Engineer Group's website:

http://www.me.ngb.army.mil/Family/Family_Pages/240th/default.htm

Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you in Christ. (1 Peter 5:14)

A man went to a marriage counselor and said, "Doc, my wife and I are just not happy any longer. Life is boring; we are stuck in the same old routine with work and kids. What should I do?"

The counselor said, "Your problem is that you're too predictable; you need more spontaneity and fun. Don't do things on a schedule, just do what you feel!"

Two weeks later the man was talking to the counselor once again. "Doc! Things are fantastic; I did just what you said. We were having a quiet dinner, and I suddenly felt, well you know, in the mood. I noticed that my wife seemed to be the same. Well, I didn't wait. I grabbed her and started kissing her. We knocked everything off the table and well, you know what happened."

"That's great!" cried the counselor. "I'm glad for you."

"There's only one problem," sulked the man, "We can't eat at McDonald's anymore."

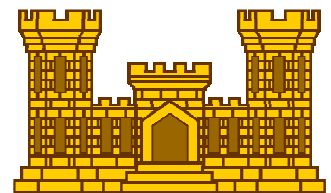
It's funny; even though we have been apart

from each other for over a year (with the possible exception of leave) we have none the less gotten into routines. Some as individuals, some as couples, some as children with their parents or vice versa. Maybe your soldier calls home at the same time every week or even day. Maybe your cards and letters are as predictable as the sunrise. Maybe the "I love you" we say at the end of a call or a letter has begun to sound automatic.

We are comfortable with sameness. We can be reassured with plans and schedules and dates, etc. However, this deprives us of the truly exciting and spontaneous aspects of life! It can also set us up for disappointments.

What we have learned over the past four years of this Global War on Terror is that the less you plan for when the soldier gets home, the happier we all are. Be careful not to schedule too many things; be careful not to put too much emphasis on that first night home (if you know what I mean). Going back to family is hard; accepting the stranger that your soldier has become is hard. The best thing we all can do is to allow today to be today and not worry about tomorrow. Your soldier will get around to see his/her friends and his/her extended families; don't try to do it all at once. Only plan parties

If you want to send packages and letters to soldiers in the 240th Engineer Group, please now send them to their individual homes. There will not be enough time for them to be received before departing for home.



**Bayonet!
Forward!**

